Le Gardien et La Gardienne

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Le Gardien et La Gardienne

by celestialcello

Summary

There could only be one who keeps, and only one who is being kept.

Prompt list from @tarmasz (https://www.instagram.com/tarmasz/?hl=en) on instagram!

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

‘What do you think of all this?’ They sat across each other under the bleak late autumn sun of Baltimore, steams rising from the white porcelain coffee cups, writhing and twisting into shapes from fever dreams until they finally disappeared. Around them, the owner of the shop has put on *The Best of The Queen.* Chords and lyricsblared through the speaker hanging from a lonely corner of the ceiling.

‘I think of you.’ She replied, ‘I think of you stepping away from me into the rain and made your way inside the door. I think of the way you looked at me.’

‘What are you accusing me of this time?’

Her carefully manicured ring finger travelled around the rim of the cup, tipped with a discreet shade of dark orange, complementing the line of gold at the base.

‘Nothing. Only that I have lately realised that I was collateral damage.’

‘Aren’t we all?’

‘Not you. The rest of us were merely accidents.’

‘A failure of the plan then; irrelevant to volitions. No one can fully predict another human being.’

‘Yet there was your deliberation in it.’

‘Wasn't there yours as well?’

‘To an extent, but never as pervasive as yours.’

Is this the real life? Or is it just fantasy?

Their eyes met above the table, he wanted to bare his teeth at the guardian of the glass cage and sink them deep down her skin - the hubris, the arrogance, the self-congratulation of one who has ever only granted a brief glimpse at reality, the detritus of a friendship past -

‘Sometimes it is hard to tell which side of the wall is the prison. The guard and the lion exchange their identity in a constant cycle.’

‘In a philosophical sense but not a psychological sense - the guard is empowered, while the lion, decapacitated. Neither is free from each other, but the guard’s rules always prevail.’

‘Careful. Once upon a time you thought it was the same with me, yet here we are.’

She nodded, ‘Yet here we are.’

The beverage has turned cold, an unappetising, stale blackness.

I don’t wanna die, but if I’m not back this time tomorrow-

She finished all of it in a long sip, leaving behind a subtle, crimson lip stain.

‘Say hi to your wife from me.’

‘Probably not. Be careful what you wish for, if you can still find within yourself a tinge of sympathy for the lion.’

‘Good day to you too.’ He made no attempt to help as she pushed herself up with the black cane. *Le règle de la chevalerie est vraiment mort.* Instead, he contemplated her stark figure framed by tailor-made suit with arched eyebrows. She tilted her head in consideration, then left the way she came. Each time her cane stroke the ground the hands on the clock moved one second - *tik, tok, tik, tok, tik, -*.

~*~

The sound of water dripping down from the granite wall enclosing the rotten sweetness of an underground dungeon. The half-man foraging mosses and snails with prolonged, crooked nails and zealous eyes, the shadows, his, its, hers.

He opened the rusty gate and sealed it with the emblem of a firefly. They shared wine and pheasant that night. Boreal wind crept through the Lithuanian forest and sank underneath their skin.

‘Why are you here looking for him, after he’s left you with a smile?’

Another memory. On life and freedom. He would not deny him his life.

Freedom, then? He was silent. He couldn’t bear the thought of him, neither could he tolerate the distance between them imposed by others’ hands.

He wanted to be at the other end of the chain, the keeper, the warden, the guard to the conjoined walls and ceilings in their minds.

’Perhaps to take from him what he has taken from you.’

’There are beasts that are destined to wander.’

’And by extension, arms that hold them until all their camouflages peel away layer by layer.’

’You seek your fate, then, or an ally?’

’Information, before all. You’ve seen things from both sides of the wood.’

’Perhaps.’

They changed the topic, having come to the wordless knowledge that tonight’s negotiation has hit a truce. She poured them both more wine as he nodded gratefully.

'What was it like, when he was here?'

'It was fine.'

'What was it like, when he was gone?'

She raised her glass in a toast, 'It was fine.'

~*~

He paid for the coffee, complimented the exacting roast, and made his way to the Bureau.

Who would be better suited to release the bolt than the very hand who secured it? The wrong hand who received the surrender, a history that needed to be rectified.

There could only be one who keeps, and only one who is being kept.

End Notes

Thanks for reading! ❤️

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